



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

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October 3, 2008

Public Health & Emergency Preparedness Bulletin: # 2008:39

Reporting for the week ending 09/27/08 (MMWR Week #39)

CURRENT HOMELAND SECURITY THREAT LEVELS

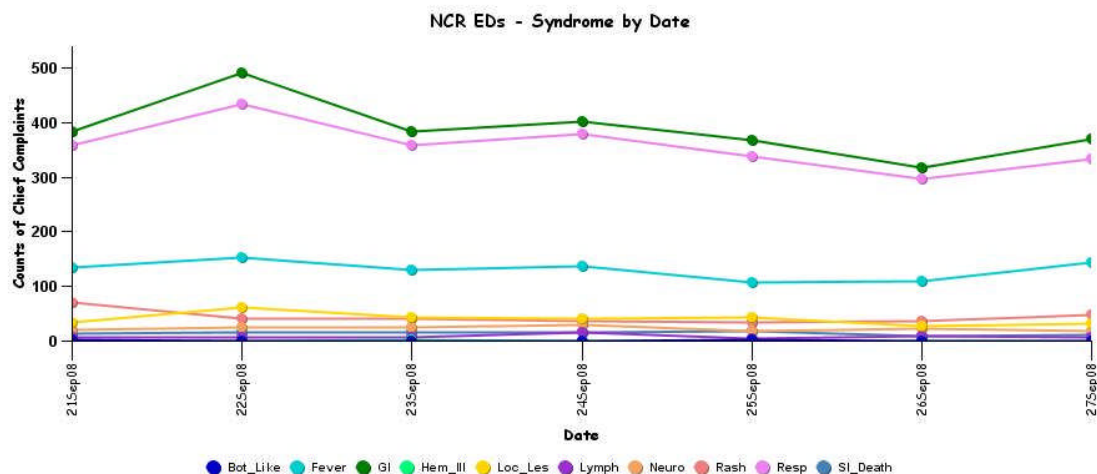
National: Yellow (ELEVATED) *The threat level in the airline sector is Orange (HIGH)
Maryland: Yellow (ELEVATED)

SYNDROMIC SURVEILLANCE REPORTS

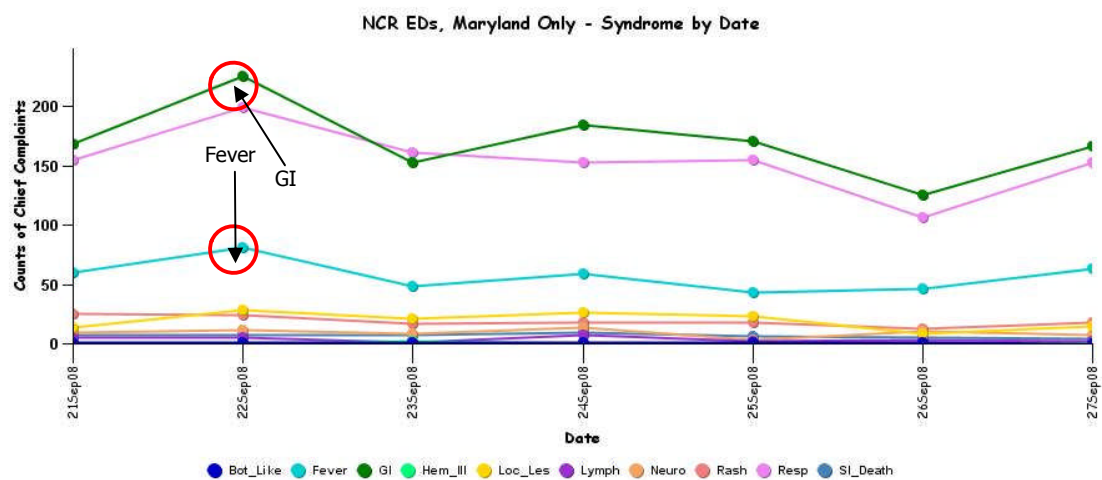
ESSENCE (Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-based Epidemics):

Graphical representation is provided for all syndromes, excluding the "Other" category, all age groups, and red alerts only. Note: ESSENCE – ANCR Spring 2006 (v 1.3) now uses syndrome categories consistent with CDC definitions.

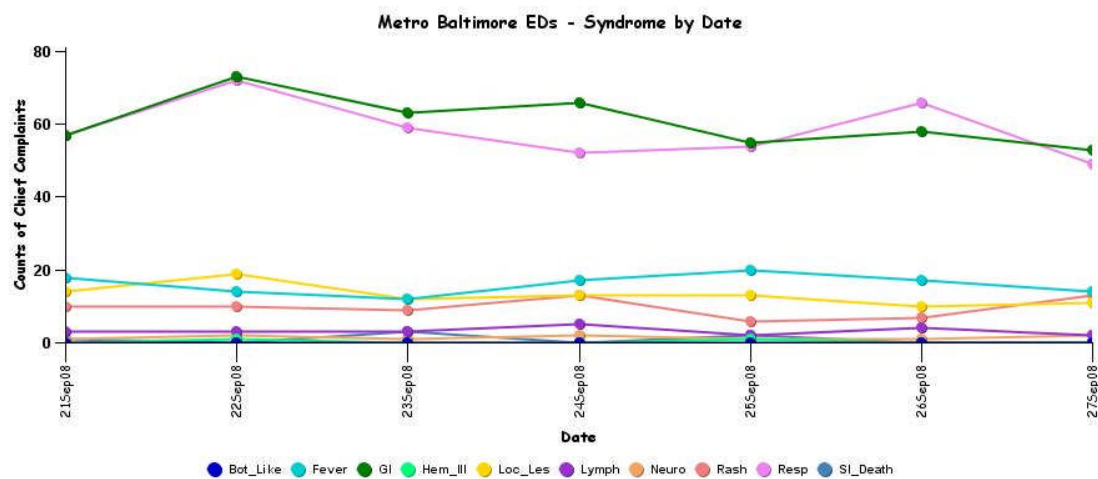
Overall, no suspicious patterns of illness were identified. Track backs to the health care facilities yielded no suspicious patterns of illness.



* Includes EDs in all jurisdictions in the NCR (MD, VA, DC) under surveillance in the ESSENCE system



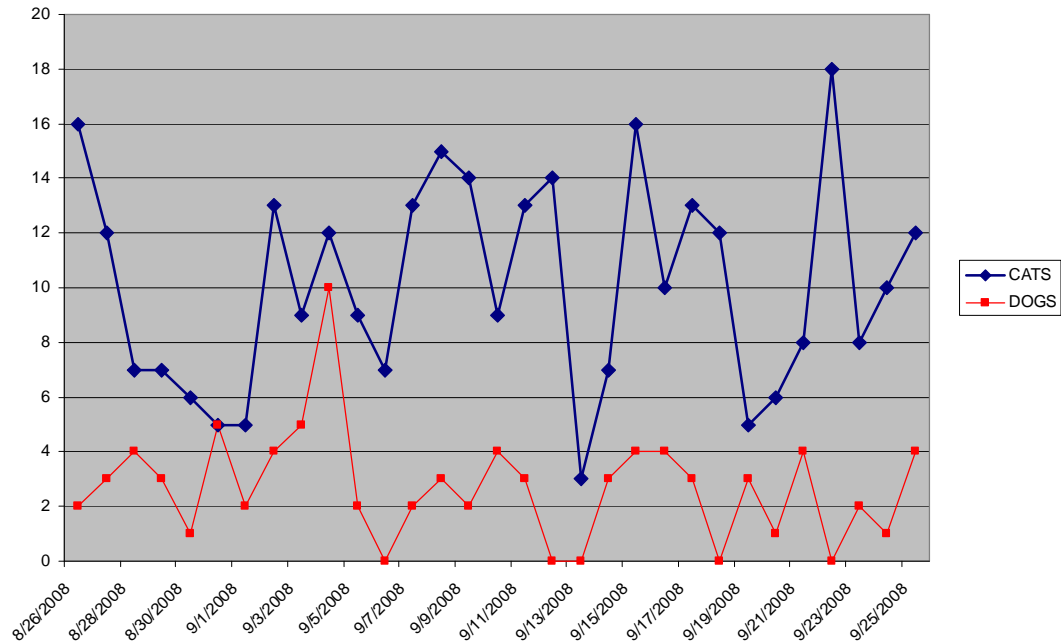
* Includes only Maryland EDs in the NCR (Prince George's and Montgomery Counties) under surveillance in the ESSENCE system



* Includes EDs in the Metro Baltimore region (Baltimore City and Baltimore County) under surveillance in the ESSENCE system.

BALTIMORE CITY SYNDROMIC SURVEILLANCE PROJECT: No suspicious patterns in the medic calls, ED Syndromic Surveillance and the animal carcass surveillance. Graphical representation is provided for animal carcass surveillance 311 data.

Dead Animal Pick-Up Calls to 311

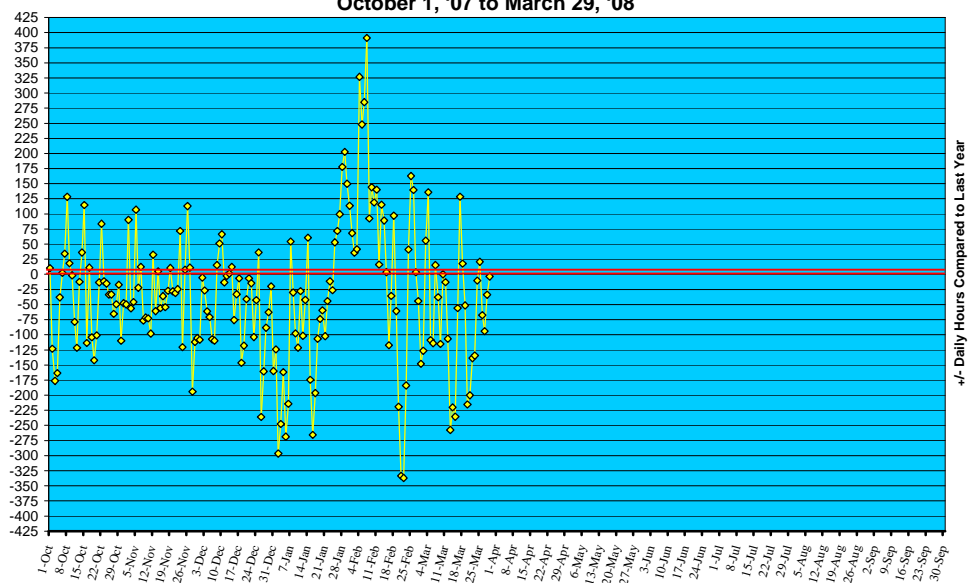


REVIEW OF EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT UTILIZATION

YELLOW ALERT TIMES (ED DIVERSION): The reporting period begins 10/01/06.

*Note: No new data available at this time.

**Statewide Yellow Alert Comparison
Daily Historical Deviations
October 1, '07 to March 29, '08**



REVIEW OF MORTALITY REPORTS

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner: OCME reports no suspicious deaths related to BT for the week.

MARYLAND TOXIDROMIC SURVEILLANCE

Poison Control Surveillance Monthly Update: Investigations of the outliers and alerts observed by the Maryland Poison Center and National Capital Poison Center in August 2008 did not identify any cases of possible terrorism events.

REVIEW OF MARYLAND DISEASE SURVEILLANCE FINDINGS

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE SURVEILLANCE CASE REPORTS (confirmed, probable and suspect):

Meningitis:	<u>Aseptic</u>	<u>Meningococcal</u>
New cases (Sept 21 – 27, 2008):	19	1
Prior week (Sept 14 – 20, 2008):	12	1
Week#39, 2007 (Sept 23 – 29, 2007):	19	0

OUTBREAKS: 1 outbreak was reported to DHMH during MMWR Week 39 (Sep. 21- Sep. 27, 2008):

1 Respiratory illness outbreak

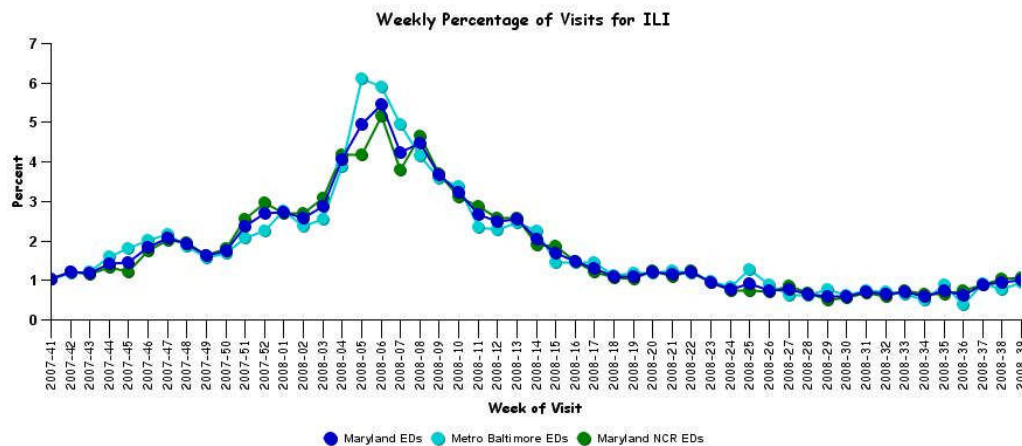
1 outbreak of AFRD associated with a Nursing Home

MARYLAND SEASONAL FLU STATUS:

Seasonal Influenza reporting occurs October through May.

SYNDROMIC SURVEILLANCE FOR INFLUENZA-LIKE ILLNESS:

Graph shows the percentage of total weekly Emergency Department patient chief complaints that have one or more ICD9 codes representing provider diagnoses of influenza-like illness. This graph does not represent confirmed influenza.



PANDEMIC INFLUENZA UPDATE / AVIAN INFLUENZA-RELATED REPORTS

WHO Pandemic Influenza Phase: Phase 3/4: No or very little human-to-human transmission/Small clusters with limited human-to-human transmission, suggesting that the virus is not well adapted to humans

US Pandemic Influenza Stage: Stage 0/1: New domestic animal outbreak in at-risk country/Suspected human outbreak overseas

*More information regarding WHO Pandemic Influenza Phase and US Pandemic Influenza Stage can be found at: <http://bioterrorism.dhmmh.state.md.us/flu.htm>

WHO update: As of September 10, 2008, the WHO-confirmed global total of human cases of H5N1 avian influenza virus infection stands at 387, of which 245 have been fatal. Thus, the case fatality rate for human H5N1 is about 63%.

AVIAN INFLUENZA (Viet Nam): 27 Sep 2008, Vietnamese authorities have detected the H5N1 avian flu virus in a flock of ducks on a farm in the southern province of Ca Mau, a government official said Friday 26 Sep 2008. Hoang Van Nam, deputy director of Viet Nam's Animal Health Department, said inspectors had found on 22 Sep 2008 that bird flu had killed more than 50 of 500 ducks on a Ca Mau farm. All the ducks at the farm were ducklings under 45 days old, and had thus not been vaccinated yet, Nam said. Authorities have culled all the ducks at the farm. "Bird flu occurs occasionally in Viet Nam," Nam said. "We cannot extinguish it, but only limit its spread." On 7 Sep 2008, the Animal Health Department announced it had detected bird flu in a flock of 600 ducks on a farm in the southern province of Ben Tre, adjacent to Ho Chi Minh City. According to Nam, bird flu outbreaks have been detected in 26 Vietnamese provinces since the beginning of 2008, killing 5 people, and forcing authorities to cull more than 60,000 ducks. Bird flu has infected 105 people in Viet Nam and killed at least 51 of them since it first appeared in the country in late 2003.

AVIAN INFLUENZA, H9 (Iraq): 25 Sep 2008, A harmless form of bird flu was found in Duhok. After the discovery of a harmless strain of the bird flu in the province's poultry, procedures are being developed to prevent its spread. "More than 50,000 chicks were destroyed at 2 poultries in Semel town because of the H9 strain of bird flu," said Luqman Tayeb Omer, general director of the Duhok veterinary office. He gave assurances that this type of bird flu is not dangerous to humans, but he also stressed that strict procedures must be taken to contain it. The veterinary office is developing a plan with related sides, especially the health and agriculture directories in the province. Omer showed optimism and stressed that the owners of the 2 infected poultries have already shown cooperation in fighting the disease. Mosul is suspected to be the source. "According to our information, this disease is found in Al-Hamdaniya, Talkef, and Shalalat districts near Mosul. It came from there. Thus, the government should take measures to prevent chicks from being brought here from those areas," said Omer. The hatcheries in Duhok are clean from the infection, Omer stated. Regarding the danger of the H9 strain, Omer gave further assurances that "this type of disease is found in several world countries and does not affect humans if necessary procedures are taken."

AVIAN INFLUENZA, LPAI (Mexico): 25 Sep 2008, An outbreak of bird flu was recorded in the northern area of the state of Veracruz, affecting 78 animals, which have already been slaughtered. Efrain Acosta Martinez, chief of the animal health program of SAGARPA (Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fishing, and Food) indicated that, in any case, surveillance continues, and an epidemiological barrier is already in place to stop the disease from spreading. Acosta Martinez added: "We have some outbreaks of avian influenza in backyards in the north, but we are already working hard to control the situation. We have evacuated the premises where the disease was detected, and we can say that we have it under control." The federal official also stated that the 78 cases were not detected in poultry farms but in animals raised in backyards. After the slaughter of the birds and epidemiological surveillance of the area, Veracruz retains its "free of avian flu" status. He explained that whenever a focus is detected, reaction has to be quick in order for the state to maintain its free-of-disease status; producers are compensated, infected animals are slaughtered, and long-term surveillance of the zone is implemented.

NATIONAL DISEASE REPORTS:

E. COLI O157, UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, LETTUCE (United States): 27 Sep 2008, Public health officials, with support from MSU (Michigan State University), have identified a brand of lettuce as the source of the recent multi-statewide outbreak of E. coli O157, an outbreak that sickened a number of MSU students. The lettuce, which had been distributed nationally by Detroit-based vendor Aunt Mid's Produce Company, is identified as shredded and chopped iceberg lettuce. The affected lettuce products were immediately removed from MSU's dining halls, even though there have been no new cases with symptom onset reported at the university since 20 Sep 2008. "We will continue to be as cautious as possible, until this issue is completely resolved," said MSU University physician Beth Alexander. On Fri 26 Sep 2008, the Michigan Department of Community Health reported 26 cases of genetically linked E. coli were spread throughout 8 Michigan counties. In addition, that same strain has also been identified in cases in Illinois, New York, Ohio, and Oregon. Health officials said it was the out-of-state cases that helped to track down a common distributor of the affected food. During the week of 22 Sep 2008 MSU made the decision to temporarily discontinue the service of all cooked turkey products, although state and local health officials did not recommend it. While turkey had not been determined as the source of the outbreak, health officials were considering it an "item of interest." Turkey products are now being offered again in MSU's dining halls. As part of the effort to trace the source of the outbreak, MSU students were asked to take part in a case control study. On Thursday 25 Sep 2008 afternoon, more than 4000 questionnaires were sent to students in Akers, Holmes, and Hubbard halls, asking them to outline their food-eating habits for the last 3

weeks. In less than 24 hours, more than 400 students responded to the call. (Food Safety Threats are listed in Category B on the CDC list of Critical Biological Agents) *Non-suspect case

CAMPYLOBACTERIOSIS, RESTAURANT, RAW CLAMS SUSPECTED (New York): 24 Sep 2008, The tally of people who got sick after eating food from Hinerwadel's Grove in Clay earlier in Sept 2008 rose to 236 on Monday 23 Sep 2008, but public health officials say the outbreak is leveling off. "The numbers have really slowed down and I do not expect this to significantly increase," said Dr Cynthia Morrow, Onondaga County's health commissioner. She said 3 of the people who got sick were hospitalized, but they have recovered and been discharged. Lab tests have identified *Campylobacter*, which could be a major cause of the outbreak. Evidence of that bacterium was found in 6 of 7 stool samples collected from people who got sick. *Campylobacter* is one of the most common causes of diarrhea, affecting more than 2.4 million Americans every year, according to the CDC. The bacterium is most commonly found in poultry, but 10 – 15 percent of clams and oysters can be contaminated with it. Public health officials suspect raw mahogany clams caused the outbreak of gastrointestinal illness among Hinerwadel's patrons because the vast majority of people who got sick said they ate them. That link, however, has not been proven because results of lab tests on the clams, being conducted in Albany and Long Island, will not be available until later this week, Morrow said. Other bacteria also may be involved in the outbreak, she said. Hinerwadel's stopped serving mahogany clams after the outbreak investigation began and switched to little neck clams. Hinerwadel's purchased the mahogany clams from a supplier in Maine who is being investigated by the state Health Department and Department of Environmental Conservation. The Health Department has not found any evidence of wrongdoing at Hinerwadel's, Morrow said. The department has interviewed more than 550 people who were exposed to the outbreak. She advised anyone who ate at Hinerwadel's and became ill on Sept 4 – 16, 2008 to call the Health Department. Morrow also advised people not to eat raw clams because doing so increases the risk of getting sick. (Food Safety Threats are listed in Category B on the CDC list of Critical Biological Agents) *Non-suspect case

EASTERN EQUINE ENCEPHALITIS, EQUINE (Maine): 23 Sep 2008, State health officials say a horse in Maine has died of eastern equine encephalitis (EEE). Dr Dora Anne Mills, director of the Maine Center for Disease Control, says the horse died this week on a farm in Lebanon. Mills said there are no reports of people getting the infection, but she urged residents in southern Maine to take simple precautions against mosquito bites such as wearing insect repellent and wearing long sleeves. Horse owners should also make sure their animals are vaccinated yearly. Eastern equine encephalitis is an infection that can be transmitted by mosquitoes and can be fatal or cause neurological problems. (Viral encephalitis is listed in Category B on the CDC list of Critical Biological Agents) *Non-suspect case

INTERNATIONAL DISEASE REPORTS:

SHIGELLOSIS, INTENTIONAL EXPOSURE SUSPECTED (Sweden): 27 Sep 2008, Sweden's security service 'Saepo' is investigating possible sabotage following an incident, which left 140 people at the headquarters of the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (Svenskt Näringsliv) suffering from dysentery. The victims, which included employees of the association, its members, and other guests, all suffered from the illness caused by *Shigella dysenteriae* after eating in the office's cafeteria several weeks ago, reports the *Veckans Affärer* magazine. 5 people suffered symptoms so severe they were admitted to a hospital. The bacteria are most often spread via contaminated water and food, but an examination of the restaurant cafeteria failed to uncover the source of the outbreak. So far no traces of the bacteria have been uncovered from any of the several tests performed in the cafeteria's kitchen. According to *Veckans Affärer*, Saepo is leading the investigation in cooperation with Swedish police. "The reason that the police want to investigate the case is that neither the department of infectious diseases nor the environmental department could ascertain the source of the infection and a group has also taken responsibility for the outbreak on its website," said the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise's Marie Rudberg to the magazine. According to the *Metro* newspaper, the group claiming responsibility for the attack is a left-leaning, internet-based forum, which had previously staged demonstrations outside of the association's headquarters. Security has been increased at the restaurant and health authorities continue working to localize the sources of the outbreak through continued interviews with around 300 people who visited the eatery over several days. (Food Safety Threats are listed in Category B on the CDC list of Critical Biological Agents) *Suspect case

ANTHRAX, SUSPECTED (Uzbekistan): 26 Sep 2008, Uzbekistan is undertaking additional measures to prevent possible carrying of anthrax to Uzbekistan. Several cases of anthrax were registered in neighboring countries. Bakhtiyar Niyazmatov, head state sanitary doctor of Uzbekistan and Deputy Health Minister, said in interview with Uza that antiepidemic units, under the Health Ministry and its regional offices, were established in all regions of Uzbekistan to coordinate and carry out measures on prevention spread of quarantine and dangerous infections. He said all necessary conditions were set at hospitals for hospitalization of suspected patients and to render all necessary medical services. State sanitary inspection is holding regular research of soil for anthrax agents in those places, where flare outbreaks of infection is possible. The process of immunization of groups of individuals with increased risk of infection is underway. He said that with the purposes of prevention of distribution of this dangerous disease in the border areas of Uzbekistan 78 Sanitary Control Units have been set up. Specialists working in these units are carrying out sanitary and medical examination of all people, crossing border, he added. (Anthrax is listed in Category A on the CDC list of Critical Biological Agents) *Non-suspect case

ANTHRAX, HUMAN, BOVINE (Zimbabwe): 26 Sep 2008, An anthrax outbreak has hit parts of Mhondoro once again, prompting the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare to suspend the sale of meat, particularly beef, in the area. There have

been moves to raise awareness on preventive measures and also calls to avoid slaughtering beasts until the situation is brought under control. So far, only one human case has been detected and authorities are still monitoring the situation to establish if there are more cases. Mashonaland West provincial medical director Dr. Wenceslas Nyamayaro urged people in the affected areas to exercise caution. "We have one confirmed case of anthrax in Chegutu district and our teams are still carrying out investigations to make sure that the disease does not spread. The situation is under control," he said. Dr. Nyamayaro said anthrax was endemic in the area but warned people to avoid slaughtering cattle - even those which looked healthy - until they had been given the green light by health officials. Anthrax is endemic in the belt just to the west of the central watershed following spore seeding by Rhodesian intelligence agents in the last years of the liberation war. (Anthrax is listed in Category A on the CDC list of Critical Biological Agents) *Non-suspect case

CONTAMINATED RICE (Japan): 25 Sep 2008, An Osaka-based Company was found early this month to have sold tons of tainted rice illegally for human consumption. Early this month, Mikasa Foods, a rice wholesaler in Osaka, admitted that it purchased a batch of contaminated rice from the government meant to be sold only as an inedible product for industry use. Mikasa then sold it to hundreds of companies across Japan to boost profits. The rice went into sake, shochu (distilled spirit), and rice crackers. Contaminated rice also went to more than 100 hospitals, homes for the elderly and at least 46 schools. Behind the current scare is polished white rice that has been found to contain pesticides or mold. The Japanese media are calling it jiko-mai, or problematic rice. The jiko-mai is imported and is the result of a deal Tokyo made with the World Trade Organization in 1995 to open its long-protected market to foreign-grown rice. Thanks to that agreement, Japan imports 770,000 tons of rice every year from the U.S., Thailand, Viet Nam, China, and Australia. Because the Japanese appetite for rice has shrunk, much of that rice is kept in storage, where some gets moldy or rots. In 2006, the government found that 2795 tons of rice in storage was contaminated with excess levels of the pesticide methamidophos, and a large volume of it was sold for industrial use. In the past 5 years, about 7400 tons of stockpiled rice unfit for human consumption has been sold for industrial use. On 6 Sep 2008, Mikasa President Mitsuo Fuyuki admitted he gave instructions to resell the rice illegally and to keep 2 sets of books. "We knew we shouldn't have done it, but we did because of the tough management," said Fuyuki at a press conference in Osaka. As the scandal develops, other firms are being implicated. By 16 Sep 2008, 3 more food companies - Asai, Ota Sangyo, and Shimada Kagaku Kogyo - were found by the agriculture ministry's inspection team to have illegally sold tainted rice, some of which was used for school lunches in Kyoto. Police searched Mikasa Foods on 24 Sep 2008. Last week, the agriculture ministry disclosed a list of 390 companies and facilities which had bought tainted rice from Mikasa. (Food Safety Threats are listed in Category B on the CDC list of Critical Biological Agents) *Suspect case

SALMONELLOSIS, INFANT FORMULA, ALERT, RECALL (France): 24 Sep 2008, A French company said Tuesday 23 Sep 2008 it had ordered the withdrawal of a batch of powdered baby milk sold exclusively in pharmacies after traces of salmonella were found in 8 babies. Stressing that there was no link to a milk scandal gripping China, Novalac said it had taken the precautionary step on suspicion that salmonella was present in boxes of AR Digest with the expiry date 18 Jun 2011. "Boxes corresponding to this batch number 10 must not be used and must be returned to pharmacies," it said in a statement. Salmonella had been observed in the feces of 8 babies, and Novalac had been alerted to the problem on Monday 22 Sep 2008, the company told Reuters. The batch in question consisted of some 4500 cartons filled with boxes of the powdered milk and had been on sale since early July 2008, it said. (Food Safety Threats are listed in Category B on the CDC list of Critical Biological Agents) *Non-suspect case

ANTHRAX, HUMAN, LIVESTOCK (Russia): 23 Sep 2008, At the end of the last week, 3 people from Ushakovka village in the Chernoyar district, Astrakhan, were hospitalized with the cutaneous form of anthrax. According to preliminary information from the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the disease occurred as a result of slaughter of livestock. Two more people from the same village were hospitalized on Saturday 20 Sep 2008, but they do not have symptoms of anthrax yet. 32 contact people have been identified and they are under medical observation. Anti-epidemic prevention measures are currently in place. (Anthrax is listed in Category A on the CDC list of Critical Biological Agents) *Non-suspect case

ANTHRAX, BOVINE (Finland): 23 Sep 2008, Two people are taking antibiotics after handling samples taken from a bull at a dairy farm in Orimattila in the province of Southern Finland. The bull was later found to have anthrax. According to Ville Lehtinen, a specialist in communicable diseases at the Finnish National Public Health Institute, the animal did not exhibit symptoms typical of anthrax, for which reason the handlers of the samples had not taken special precautions. The diagnosis came after the animal had been examined by a veterinarian because of an infection. Prophylactic medication was administered to the 2 employees who had handled the samples in a laboratory. The medication was a precaution, as they had not exhibited any symptoms. The young bull found to have the disease was put down. In the coming week veterinary officials will examine all of the cattle on the farm for possible anthrax infection. One other animal on the farm has been exhibiting fever. A partial quarantine is in effect at the farm: no animals or animal feed may be taken from it. Head inspector Sirpa Kiviruusu of the Finnish Food Safety Authority EVIRA believes that the infection has come from the soil on the farm, where anthrax spores can live for decades. She adds that there is no indication that the disease would have spread outside the farm. It is the 2nd time in 4 years that anthrax was found on the farm in question. (Anthrax is listed in Category A on the CDC list of Critical Biological Agents) *Non-suspect case

FOODBORNE ILLNESS (Afghanistan): 22 Sep 2008, At least 100 Afghan policemen and government officials, including a deputy provincial governor, were poisoned after eating their evening meal. A man claiming to be from the Taliban said he had carried out the mass poisoning, but NATO's military force, which offered medical treatment, said it was believed to be a straightforward case of food poisoning. About 100 men fell ill in the eastern province of Nuristan late

20 Sep 2008 after eating Iftar, the evening meal that breaks a day of fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, deputy provincial governor Abdul Halim said. They had all eaten food prepared in the kitchen of the governor, which feeds some provincial authorities and police who guard the compound. "After we had our Iftar, about 100 people felt really ill," he said. Many had fainted, and about 360 people were given medical treatment. Halim said he had also taken ill but had recovered by Sunday 21 Sep 2008. The provincial police chief was, however, still being treated in a clinic, he said. The source of the poisoning appeared to have been the bread, but it was being investigated. NATO's International Security Assistance Force, in Afghanistan to help the government defeat a Taliban-led insurgency, said about 160 people were treated at a clinic and 200 more at a local police station. "Although the cause of the illness is not fully understood, it is believed to be a straightforward case of food poisoning, and the matter is being investigated by the Afghan National Police," it said in a statement. A man who gave his name as Ajab Khan and said he was a Taliban commander in the region claimed responsibility for the poisoning and said 300 people had been affected. (Food Safety Threats are listed in Category B on the CDC list of Critical Biological Agents) *Suspect case

UNDIAGNOSED TOXIN, FOODBORNE (Japan): 22 Sep 2008, Two employees of a Japanese confectionery company fell sick after eating China-made bean paste in the latest apparent food scare here, police and the firm said on Saturday 20 Sep 2008. The workers at Marusei Honten confectionery in central Nagano prefecture noticed a strange smell like petroleum oil when they opened the 5-kilogram package of red bean paste on Friday 19 Sep 2008, police said. They tasted it to check on the quality and felt sick soon afterwards, police said. The employees, a man and a woman in their 30s, complained of numbness in their limbs and were taken to hospital. They were in stable condition, police said. "Police suspect the food was laced with poison," a local police spokesman said. Japan has recently been hit by food scares over China-made poisoned dumplings and pesticide-laced rice. Farm minister Seiichi Ota resigned on Friday 19 Sep 2008 in a spiraling scare over the pesticide-laced imported rice, which was served to hospital patients and schoolchildren instead of being used for non-food products such as glue. Ten people suffered pesticide poisoning in December 2007 and January 2008 after eating dumplings imported from China, while thousands more complained about feeling ill. (Food Safety Threats are listed in Category B on the CDC list of Critical Biological Agents) *Suspect case

OTHER RESOURCES AND ARTICLES OF INTEREST:

More information concerning Public Health and Emergency Preparedness can be found at the Office of Preparedness and Response website: <http://bioterrorism.dhmd.state.md.us/>

NOTE: This weekly review is a compilation of data from various surveillance systems, interpreted with a focus on a potential BT event. It is not meant to be inclusive of all epidemiology data available, nor is it meant to imply that every activity reported is a definitive BT event. International reports of outbreaks due to organisms on the CDC Critical Biological Agent list will also be reported. While not "secure", please handle this information in a professional manner. Please feel free to distribute within your organization, as you feel appropriate, to other professional staff involved in emergency preparedness and infection control.

For questions about the content of this review or if you have received this and do not wish to receive these weekly notices, please e-mail me. If you have information that is pertinent to this notification process, please send it to me to be included in the routine report.

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